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Notes

Contributions in the form of notes or discussions should be sent to Campbell Bonner, 1512½ Demonbreun Street, Nashville, Tenn.

THE HOMERIC PHRASE εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε

δαῖτηρ αὐτ' ἐμὸς ἔσκε κυνώπιδος, εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε. (*Il.* iii. 180)

This formula is found in five other passages, namely *Il.* xi. 762; xxiv. 426; *Od.* xv. 268; xix. 315; xxiv. 289. Apart from the suggestion of Georg Curtius (*Curt. Stud.* I. 286) that we should read ἦ for εἰ, there are two interpretations offered. Some believe that the phrase contains an expression of doubt that the happy past could ever have been true (see, besides others, Leaf and Seymour on *Il.* iii. 180 and Merry on *Od.* xv. 68). Others take just the contrary view, finding instead of an expression of doubt an assurance that the past was really once present (see Monro and Ameis-Hentze). The difficulties in each of these views will be realized by anyone who tries to apply them to all six passages. The supporters of the second interpretation have ridiculed the first as applied to the passages in the *Iliad*, but themselves have great difficulty in explaining the development in meaning when the phrase seems to modify a single noun like ἐμὸν παῖδα in *Od.* xxiv. 289 (cf. Ameis-Hentze on *Od.* xv. 268, Anhang, where it is suggested that the speaker is not assuring the person addressed, but comforting himself with an "aside").

I presume that hundreds, untrammelled by notes and parallel passages, have translated *Il.* iii. 180 "shameless, if ever there was one," taking εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε, like εἴ τις καὶ ἄλλος, as giving a superlative effect to κυνώπιδος. The meaning thus obtained is here so infinitely superior to either of the others that it is worth while to inquire whether the parallel passages really render it impossible. In *Od.* xxiv. 289 we have ἐμὸν παῖδ', εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε, δύσμορον, "my son ill-fated, if ever there was one," a translation certainly superior to "how many years is it since you entertained my son, if ever he lived (*as he certainly did* or *I can hardly believe it*), ill-fated one." There is also no difficulty in *Od.* xix. 315, which runs

ἐπεὶ οὐ τοῖσι σημάτωντορές εἰσ' ἐνὶ οἴκῳ,
οἷος Ὀδυσσεὺς ἔσκε μετ' ἀνδράσι, εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε,

"since there are not such masters in the house as Odysseus was among men, if ever there was such," i. e., in the highest degree. There is a

marked similarity between this passage and *Il.* xi. 762, ὥς ἔον, εἴ ποτ' ἔον γε, μετ' ἀνδράσιν, the words with which Nestor closes the description of the glorious deeds of his youth. The parallelism of the two passages is particularly fortunate because the view that εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε is an expression of doubt that the person in question ever existed finds its strongest support in the use of the phrase by Telemachus, Penelope, and Laertes when speaking of the long-absent Odysseus, while the weakness of this view is particularly apparent in *Il.* xi. 762, since Nestor neither doubts his own existence nor the glories of his youth. The use of the first singular εἴ ποτ' ἔον would at first sight settle the question absolutely against the translation "if ever there was such." But, while the editors universally give ἔον, the weight of MSS authority is entirely for ἔην, which is the reading of Venetus A, Venetus B, Laurentianus XXXII. 3 and 15, and others, while ἔον has the support only of Lipsiensis and some minor codices. Turning to *Od.* xv. 268 we read

ἐξ Ἰθάκης γένος εἰμί, πατὴρ δέ μοι ἔστιν Ὀδυσσεύς,
εἴ ποτ' ἔην· νῦν δ' ἤδη ἀπέφθιτο λυγρὸν Διὶ θεῶν.

Here, again, we seem to have conclusive evidence that one or other of the ordinary interpretations is correct, since there is apparently no word such as *κυνῶπις*, *δύσμορος*, or *τοῖος* for εἴ ποτ' ἔην to qualify. I venture, however, to suggest that there is here a play upon the meaning of the name Ὀδυσσεύς, such as we have in the words of Autolycus in *Od.* xix. 407:

πολλοῖσιν γὰρ ἐγὼ γε ὀδυσσάμενος τὸδ' ἰκάνω,
τῷ δ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ὄνομ' ἔστω ἐπώνυμον.

It has been held (cf. Ebeling *Lex. Hom.*) that ὀδυσσάμενος is best taken here in a passive meaning and that Ὀδυσσεύς, according to this etymology, means "The Hated" and not "The Hater." In xv. 268 we might, therefore, translate "and my father is Odysseus, the Hated, if ever there was one." with reference to his constant ill-fortune. It is perhaps worth while to point out that this passage is part of the Theoclymenus episode which has been judged by so many critics to be an interpolation (cf. Blass, *Die Interpolationen in der Odyssee*, p. 248, and Hennings, *Homers Odyssee*, p. 111).

There remains but one passage,

ἐπεὶ οὐ ποτ' ἐμὸς πάϊς, εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε,
λήθεται ἐνὶ μεγάροισι θεῶν. (*Il.* xxiv. 426)

Here it must be admitted that, if the interpretation for which I am contending is correct, εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε had acquired so much of a formal char-

acter that it could be used even when not attached to an epithet like *κυνῶπις*; for here we should have to translate "it is good to give gifts to the gods, for least of all men did my son forget the gods; therefore have they remembered him." The meaning at least is excellent, while it is difficult to see why Priam, when seeking to ransom the body of his son so lately killed, should express either a doubt that he had ever existed, or an assurance that he really once had a son. Further, the supporters of the other views must also assume a development of the phrase to a formal meaning and a development less easy to follow.

A. G. LAIRD

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

PLAUTUS *TRIN.* 368

Sapienti aetas condimentum, sapiens aetati cibust.

Though rejected by Ritschl, this verse is defended by Haupt, Ussing, and Brix, and is retained by Leo and most of the more recent editors. It seems, however, to be still in need of satisfactory interpretation. Freeman and Sloman pronounce it meaningless and omit it; Goetz and Schoell obelize *sapiens*, and Brix and Morris admit finding the concrete use of the word rather strange and hard; and all explanations that I have seen¹ seem to me to involve the clauses in hopeless inconsistency with each other.

I believe that the verse is sound in text and that it stands in its proper place in A and in our editions. Two suggestions will, I hope, contribute something toward clearing up its meaning. One is that *sapienti* and *sapiens* may be used here not as substantives, but to refer, perhaps somewhat loosely, to *ingenio* of the preceding verse. To take it so relieves in some measure the harshness referred to, by substituting *sapiens ingenium* for "the wise man," in much the same way that Livy (i. 9. 16) writes *muliebre ingenium* for "women." The other is that the close connection that exists between the two clauses has been generally overlooked, and that too much has, in consequence, been read into the second one. The terms here used may very well have been drawn from some such expression, probably proverbial, as that quoted by Cicero (*Fin.* ii. 28. 90) from Socrates, *cibi condimentum esse famem*. However that may be, the terms are here, and the relation between them is emphasized. Between native wisdom and age, our verse declares, the relation is that of a viand and its seasoning: the first clause asserts that age is, with reference to wisdom,

¹ Possibly with the exception of Morris'; I cannot be sure from his note whether or not he understands the verse to mean that age subsists upon wisdom.